

How much do you know about the history of squash? Here are 60 facts which you might find interesting... And sometimes surprising...

1. Squash developed from Racquets, which was itself a modified version of *fives*
2. The name 'fives' may be derived from the expression "a bunch of fives" (meaning a fist) since it is played with the hand and not a racquet
3. There are two main types of 'fives' – Rugby Fives and Eton Fives – though other variations exist.
4. Rugby Fives is played on a hazard free, 4-sided court similar to a squash court
5. Although both Fives and squash are associated with public schools, Racquets actually originated in prisons during the 18 century! The prisoners in "The Fleet", mainly debtors, took their exercise by hitting a ball against walls, of which there were many, with rackets and so started the game of "Racquets"
6. Racquets became especially popular at Harrow School
7. Harrow had two racquet courts available, but impatient boys waiting to play improvised, practicing on any available wall with old balls.
8. One area in the school grounds, known as "The Corner", was particularly popular. With two side walls and a front wall with a buttress, this was effectively an enclosed court
9. The boys at Harrow also liked to use other, nearby architectural features to add 'quirks to their games, such as drainpipes, guttering and windowsills.
10. The quirks used by Harrow boys required fast reactions, and so the boys modified the racquet (shortening the handle) and the ball
11. The modified ball used by Harrow boys, sometimes a punctured regular racquets ball, *squashed* against the wall, rather than bouncing back.
12. This key element of the modified ball used at Harrow, the *squashed* ball, gave rise to the name squash
13. The Harrow modified game gained in popularity and in 1864, the school built the first of four purpose built 'squash' courts, roughly a third of the size of the racquets courts

14. The first recorded reference to "Squash", other than in Harrow school, appeared in 1890 in the English book "The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes" written by the Duke of Beaufort. Eustace Miles
15. By the late 19th century, squash was popular in public schools and universities throughout Britain
16. In 1908, a squash sub-committee of the Tennis and Rackets Association was formed to oversee the sport.
17. While the parent sport of racquets dwindled to near oblivion, squash spread from the UK around the globe, helped by its simplicity and the fact it was played indoors and was, therefore, unaffected by inclement weather.
18. In 1912 the Tennis, Rackets & Fives Association was founded at Queen's and a sub-committee issued a preliminary set of rules
19. Some of the early rules were rather idiosyncratic: Court length and width was considered a matter of local opinion, serving could be either one serve or two, courts could have a cut line on the front wall or not and most delightfully, the man returning could have the right of "refusing a service he does not like".
20. After the early rules created at Queen's in 1912, another eleven years passed without any official standards. In January 1923 the Royal Automobile Club hosted a meeting of delegates from English clubs where squash was played, and formed a "Squash Rackets Representative Committee."
21. By 1928, the rules of the game had been codified and the British Squash Rackets Association had taken over administration of the sport
22. Whilst court sizes were reasonably standardised, the ball has undergone many changes, some incremental, others more severe; between 1930 and 1934, for example, the association cut the ball speed by more than half
23. You may think that the (relatively) recent change to point a rally matches amongst professionals (colloquially known as American scoring) is tampering with tradition. However, until 1926, point-a-rally scoring to 15 was the standard.
24. The first professional Squash Championship was held in 1920 in England, when C.R. Read (Queens Club) beat A.W.B. Johnson (RAC Club).

25. In 1973 (for women) and 1980 (for men), the categories of *amateur* and *professional* were abolished, so that squash became an open game
26. By the early 1990s, there were 12 million squash players worldwide
27. The first British Open Championship was held in 1933, and won by an Egyptian player named F.D. Amr Bey
28. F.D. Amr Bey, having won the inaugural event, went on to gain four more British Open titles – which may explain why squash became so well established in Bey's home nation. Today, Egypt is still addicted to the sport and has 3700 squash courts – more than can be found in all the rest of Africa.
29. Unusually, the first major competition for women squash players preceded the men's event by 11 years, taking place in 1922, and won by Miss J.I. Cave
30. Until 1960 the ladies' title belonged solely to English players, with Janet Morgan (Shardlow) winning 10 times between 1950 and 1959
31. The British Open was effectively the world championship event until, in January 1967, seven nations formed the International Squash Rackets Federation (ISRF)
32. Squash appeared in the Commonwealth Games in 1998, with men's, women's and mixed singles and doubles being played.
33. British army officers stationed in Peshawar in the North West Frontier built a club, including several outdoor squash courts. They couldn't have known what an impact on the world of squash this was going to have...
34. The squash professional at the club in Peshawar was Abdulmajid Khan, and Abdullah Khan was the steward
35. Abdulmajid Khan, and Abdullah Khan, the professional and steward respectively at the army officer's club in Peshawar, were not related but their families later intermarried and an almost unconquerable dynasty of Pakistani squash players was born.
36. Eleven Khans have competed at the highest level of the sport in the intervening century since the army officer's club in Peshawar was built.
37. Hashim Khan won the first of his seven British Open titles in 1951 at the age of 35 years. He continued to play into his 90s.

38. Most consider Jahangir and Jansher to be the most outstanding of the Khan dynasty in squash
39. Jahangir Khan won the World Open six times, and the British Open on ten occasions
40. Incredibly, Jahangir Khan was unbeaten for five years between 1981 and 1986, winning **555** matches in a row!
41. Jansher Khan won the World Junior Squash Championship at the age of 17 and went on to win the World Open a record eight times and the British Open an impressive six times.
42. Doubles began at the Racquet Club of Philadelphia in 1907 when Fred Tompkins, the tennis and rackets pro at the club, erected a forty-five feet by twenty-five court.
43. The rate of squash injury in the general population is 18 injuries per 1,000 hours of participation
44. A Frederick Wright was among those who died in the sinking of the Titanic. He was the squash court attendant, who supplied racquets and balls, and could provide opposition for players wanting a game. The charge was 2 shillings.
45. John White, the Australian former world number 1, was known to regularly hit the ball at around 165mph, and one shot was recorded at 172mph, a record that stood until October 2011 when Cameron Pilley recoded a shot at 175mph.
46. Prince Phillip was playing squash whilst the Queen was giving birth to Prince Charles
47. Martin Freeman (Bilbo Baggins in The Hobbit movies, and Dr Watson in the television series Sherlock) was part of the British national junior squash squad between the ages of 9 and 14
48. Entertainer Tommy Steele was a keen (and proficient) squash player. He once took part in a celebrity squash tournament, and was beaten in the final.
49. Tommy Steele was beaten in the final of a celebrity squash tournament by Leonard Rossiter, of Rising Damp, Reggie Perrin and those Cinzano adverts fame:

"Derek Benfield, and I took Len - in plimsolls and with a borrowed racquet - on to a cold squash court at the Grampians Squash Court in Shepherd's Bush and taught him the rudiments of the game. Within an hour he had mastered the rules, within a week he was playing and within a year he was far too good for Derek and myself - and subsequently he made himself one of the top players in our business." –

Frederick Jaeger, co-star and friend.

50. Only four official PSA matches have lasted 2 and a half hours or more:

Holtrand Gas City Pro-Am 2015, semifinal.

(2hrs 50mins) Leo Au bt Shawn Delierre 11-6, 4-11, 11-6, 7-11, 16-14

Chichester Festival 1983, final.

(2hrs 46mins) Jahangir Khan bt Gamal Awad 9-10, 9-5, 9-7, 9-2

National Capital Open 2013, final.

(2hrs 37mins) Shawn Delierre bt Adrian Waller 11-3, 12-10, 14-12, 4-11, 14-12

Baltimore Cup 2008, semifinal.

(2hrs 30) mins Shawn Delierre bt Shahier Razik 9-11, 8-11, 11-7, 13-11, 11-5

The sharp eyed amongst you will notice that Shawn Delierre seems to make a habit of this...

51. Players getting 'in your box' in doubles? Well, just as in singles, there is no requirement for the receiver to stand in any particular place for returning service in doubles. The partner of the server and the partner of the receiver can stand anywhere on the court as long as they do not cause any interference to either the server or receiver! (World Squash Rules FAQs)
52. The famous 'bouncing bomb', used by the 'Dam Busters' was designed in a squash court! Barnes Wallis, the designer, had been moved to Burhill Golf Club in Hersham, after the Vickers factory at Brooklands was bombed during World War 2. It was here, in the club's squash court that he worked on designs for the bomb.
53. It has been calculated that a player may burn 1,034 calories per hour of play. This compares to 905 on a stationary bike, 862 for football, 776 in a cross country run, 689 for tennis and 689 for basketball over the same duration.
54. On 3-4th May 2014, Adam Bates and Alex Gill of Nottingham played squash (singles) for 33 hr 8 min and gained an entry in the Guinness World Records for the longest squash marathon. Some players, it should be noted, have questioned this, claiming to have played even longer!
55. According to Guinness World Records, the most competitive games of squash played in a lifetime is 2,982 by Sam Balsdon of Totnes, UK. He played his first match on 25 November 1974 and has played games on 245 different courts. Balsdon has played in local box leagues, amateur clubs, knock out competitions and box league championships, both in singles and team play. Some of our members may feel they've played far more?
56. To complete these 60 days of trivia and facts about squash, let's finish with some quotes. They won't all be directly about squash, but I think you'll agree that the 2 that aren't are very much appropriate!

“My definition of winning at squash is playing and surviving, and I've never lost a match”.

Arlen Specter, US politician

57. *“The more I practice, the luckier I get”.*

Jerry Barber, golfer

58. *“Squash is boxing with racquets”.*

Jonah Barrington

59. *“Honesty and respect will give you balls of steel. If you pick up a double bounce, or try to gain any kind of unfair advantage on court, you are CHEATING. You have already lost the rally, so give it up and walk away. You have around one to 1.5 seconds between shots (much less if you volley) so honesty will help you to concentrate much better on that next shot. If you cheat, you will know you cheated in five minutes, five hours, five days, five weeks, five months and five years down the line. Do you really want to carry all that baggage around with you?”*

Alan Thatcher, Organiser of World Squash Day

60. And finally... Is there a truer sentiment?

“If winning isn't everything, why do they keep score?”

Vince Lombardi, US football player and coach